

NOLAND, TOPP, VANCE, AND OTHERS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN RELATION TO

The claim of Noland, Topp, Vance, and others, for cotton taken from them.

JUNE 19, 1874.—Referred to the Committee on War-Claims and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, June 3, 1874.

The chief clerk of the War Department, in the absence of the Secretary of War, has the honor to transmit to the House of Representatives, for the information of the Committee on War-Claims, copies of papers, marked A, B, and C, respecting the claims of Noland, Topp, Vance, and others, in reply to letter of said committee of the 1st instant, requesting information in regard to cotton taken from one Noland, or from W. L. Grant, assignee of Noland, for easing steamboats to run the blockade at Vicksburgh, or for any other military purpose.

The proceedings of the board of officers, referred to in inclosed papers, were forwarded to General Sherman's headquarters, where action was taken in certain cases, but they cannot now be found with the records of discontinued commands.

It is respectfully suggested that additional information on these claims may be on file in the Treasury Department.

H. T. CROSBY,
Chief Clerk.

Transcript from indorsement-book, headquarters, Department and Army of the Tennessee.

(P. 11.)

Indorsement on proceedings of a board of officers convened at Vicksburgh by S. O. 67, dated headquarters 17th A. C., Vicksburgh, Miss., March 11, 1864, to hear and adjudicate all claims of loyal citizens residing on the Mississippi River, within the limits of the district, of which Col. F. A. Starring, Seventy-second Illinois, is president, in the case of Joseph Noland, citizen.

(Not entered.)

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT AND ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE,
Huntsville, Ala., May 5, 1864.

Proceedings approved, and the claimant will be placed in the possession of as many bales of cotton, not exceeding six hundred, (600,) as can by undoubted proof be shown

to have been taken and used by proper authority, for military or naval purposes, indicated in the claim which will be turned over to him from any that may have been confiscated and held for the benefit of the Government.

By order of Major-General McPherson.

WM. T. CLARK,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Indorsement on proceedings of a board of officers convened at Vicksburgh, Miss., by Special Order No. 67, dated Headquarters Seventeenth Army Corps, Vicksburgh, Miss., March 11, 1864, to hear and adjudicate all claims of loyal citizens residing on the Mississippi River, within the limits of the district of which Col. F. A. Starring, Seventy-second Illinois, is president, in the case of Topp & Vance, citizens. (Not entered.)

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT AND ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE,
Ackworth, Ga., June 7, 1864.

Proceedings of the board approved, and the case will be disposed of in accordance with the indorsement of General Sherman, herewith inclosed.*

By order of Major General McPherson.

WM. T. CLARK,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Official copy :

THOMAS M. VINCENT,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
Saint Louis, Mo., August 17, 1865.

SIR: The inclosed papers contain the substance of an inquiry that I feel it difficult to make clearly and fully by reason of the many changes that have occurred since the date of the transaction.

I marched from Vicksburgh for Meridian, February 5, 1864, and contemporaneously dispatched an expedition up Yazoo, to produce a diversion, punish certain parties who were hostile, and to bring out cotton to indemnify the Government and certain friendly parties on the river Mississippi who had been robbed by confederate authority.

The expedition was under a Colonel Coates, with four or five transports, and Lieut. Commander Owen, United States Navy, with two gun-boats. The former reported to me, and the report must be on file at the Adjutant-General's Office, and the latter reported to Admiral Porter.

I returned to Vicksburgh, February 29, and went down to New Orleans to see General Banks, and returned to Vicksburgh, March 5, when I got orders to haste to Nashville, to take command of the armies operating about Chattanooga.

I left all matters under the control of General McPherson, with orders to turn over all cotton brought out of the Yazoo to Colonel McDowell, Treasury agent at Vicksburgh.

I have no personal knowledge of the amount brought out by Colonel Coates, but heard from General McPherson that the bulk was claimed by the Navy as prize, and he yielded the claim. Whatever balance there was went to the Treasury agent.

It is utterly absurd to suppose that General McPherson would permit cotton to be improperly converted, but he is not living and cannot answer.

Colonel McDowell, Treasury agent, the quartermaster at Vicksburgh at the date, viz, March 1, 1864, and Captain Owen, United States Navy, must know all about the transportation and must know the bill of lading, receipts, &c., showing the description of every bale.

None of these parties are now subject to my control, and I have not even the means of knowing where they are, but an inquiry addressed to each of these to state what disposition was made of the Yazoo cotton, will elicit all the facts.

My military duties called me so far away from the place that I have no other knowledge whatever on the subject.

I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,

W. T. SHERMAN,
Major-General.

Col. W. A. NICHOLS,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Official copy :

THOMAS M. VINCENT,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

* Alleged indorsement does not appear on record-books.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., May 1, 1874.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 18th ultimo, with inclosures, requesting me to furnish your office information relating to the large quantity of cotton captured by the Yazoo River expedition, in 1864, and I am at loss to know why this inquiry is made of me here.

I would, as I always have done, be glad to furnish all the information in my possession. But I am here, a thousand miles away from my office and papers. I have no clerk here, and my other duties occupy all my time, so that it is almost impossible for me to go to my retained papers, on file at the War Department and Treasury Department, and get such information as you may wish.

If you will allow me to state from recollection, I would state that I never had anything whatever, to do with the cotton mentioned. The Treasury Department handled all the cotton while I was at Vicksburgh, as I understood.

I never touched a bale of cotton, while in the service, that was not taken up and properly accounted for. Of this, I am positive. I can give no information about cotton that cannot be got from my returns, on file in your Department.

While on duty at Vicksburgh, the men and teams in my charge took from the Confederate breastworks a large amount of cotton, which was delivered to the Treasury agent on the spot. And I organized a wrecking party and took the engines from about twenty sunken steamers, and, while at that work recovered several thousand bales of cotton, all of which was immediately delivered to the Treasury agent at Vicksburgh.

There were other quartermasters on duty at Vicksburgh, but, I never heard of a bale of cotton having been in their hands. I never heard of the lot of cotton you mention, as I now remember those times.

I shall at all times be glad to serve you.

Very respectfully,

G. L. FORT.

General E. D. TOWNSEND,

Assistant Adjutant-General United States Army, Washington, D. C.

Official copy:

THOMAS M. VINCENT,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

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